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ABSTRACT

This book presents letters, a personal narrative, and a diary relating the experiences of nine women teachers who traveled from the East to teach on western frontiers before the Civil War. During 1846-56, the National Popular Education Board recruited 600 experienced teachers from New England and New York State; trained them in Hartford, Connecticut; and sent them to teach in frontier communities from western Pennsylvania to eastern Nebraska Territory, and also in Oregon. Part 1 discusses the economic, religious, and other personal reasons why many single women decided to migrate west, the training they received, and common aspects of their teaching experiences. The second section presents the diary of Arozina Perkins, who traveled from Connecticut to Fort Des Moines, Iowa, in 1850. Her diary, which details her life from November 1848 to June 1851, reveals her agonizing decision to go west, training in Hartford, struggles to succeed as a teacher in Iowa, and disillusionment with life in the West. The third section presents the letters of seven pioneer teachers that also express the problems of single working women in a pioneer society, and describe in detail where they lived and taught, which religious groups they encountered, and how they related to men. The last chapter in this section includes the personal narrative of Mary Gray McLench, one of five women teachers who traveled by ship to the Oregon Territory in 1851, a unique and and perilous journey. Appendices include materials from the National Popular Education Board, profiles of pioneer women teachers, and information on the lives of 224 pioneer women teachers. Contains photographs, illustrations, a bibliography, and an index. (LP)

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